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SECOND CONGRESS OF MAYORS OF ALGERIA

The Second Congress of Mayors of Algeria was held in Constantine on 5 and 6 October 1952. Mayors of various western European cities attended as guests. There were many speeches on local matters and some on international relations. The following are summaries of newspaper accounts of the proceedings and of a nationalist press criticism of the congress.

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List Major Participants in the Congress

Le Journal d'Alger reported on 2 October 1952 that Governor General Leonard would address the Second Congress of Mayors. It indicated that mayors of France and members of the Mouvement des Communes d'Europe (Movement of Communes of Europe) would also be present. The newspaper's list of speakers included the following: Eugene Valle, mayor of Constantine and delegate to the Algerian Assembly; Isella, president of the Interfederation des Maires d'Algérie (Interfederation of Mayors of Algeria); Froger, mayor of Boufarik, delegate to the Algerian Assembly, president of the Federation des Maires du Département d'Alger (Federation of Mayors of the Algiers Department), and vice-president of the Association Nationale des Maires de France (National Association of Mayors of France).

Also, Prince, mayor of Hussein Dey and secretary general of the interfederation; Fournier, mayor of Kerrata and president of the General Council of Constantine; Falcone, mayor of Collo and deputy secretary general of the interfederation; Braci, vice-president of the Federation des Maires du Département de Constantine (Federation of Mayors of the Constantine Department), Bucaille, mayor of Guyotville; Gilbert Gaouer, secretary general of the Mouvement des Communes d'Europe; Henri Alci, mayor of Bugeaud, general councilor, and delegate to the Algerian Assembly; Alfred Malpel, mayor of Bain, general councilor and delegate to the Algerian Assembly; and Le Gallo, mayor of Boulogne-Billancourt and secretary general of the Association Nationale des Maires de France.

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The newspaper also listed various delegates from European communities as follows: Italy, D'Angelo, member of the Regional Assembly of Sicily; Belgium, Rene Jurdant; Saar, Diedrich-Brokmeir; Luxembourg, J.P. Wilheim; and unidentified delegates from Great Britain and Switzerland.

The report stated that before proceeding to Constantine, the visiting dignitaries would be taken on a tour of Philippeville and Bone, where they would be shown docks, new buildings, factories, and industries.(1)

L'Echo d'Alger of 6 October gave the following additional names of participants at the congress: Delrieu, senator; Charles Brincat, delegate to the Algerian Assembly; Teuler, member of the Federation des Maires [specific federation not indicated]. Monsignor Duval; Fouques-Duparc, senator, mayor of Oran; Bernard Lecornu, prefect of Constantine; and Raoul Mandon, vice-president of the Algerian Assembly.(2)

Other names, given by L'Echo d'Oran on 7 October were as follows: Pantaloni, deputy, mayor of Bone; Jacques Augarde, senator, mayor of Bougie; and Mme Regine Lieu, mayor of Bordj Bou Arreridj and delegate to the Algerian Assembly.(3)

Mayors Speak on Local Matters, Pass Resolution

According to the 6 October issue of Le Journal d'Alger, the congress opened on 5 October with a welcoming address by Isella, followed by Mayor Valle's statement that the participants would see in Algeria a hard-working country, indissolubly bound to France. The newspaper report went on to say that Mayor Froger spoke on "Algeria, Component of European Civilization"; that Mayor Fournier dealt with the problem of power supply in Algeria; that Broci presented a study on municipal centers; and that Mayor Falcone explained the economic situation of the Constantine Department.

Afterward, according to the source, Mayor Valle put to a vote a motion, unanimously approved by the congress, expressing the opinion that the mayors of Algeria should be represented in the Conseil Economique (Economic Council) and that the representation should be sufficient to enable them to contribute adequately to discussions of Algerian economic affairs.(4)

Banquet Speeches by Former Minister, Governor General

In its issue of 6 October, Le Journal d'Alger also reported that a banquet was held in the afternoon of 5 October, when delegate Gaouer, speaking for his colleagues of the Mouvement des Communes d'Europe, said that the presence of France could be felt in Algeria. According to the source, he declared that the mayors' visit had not been an "organized" tour, so that they were able to speak with city and rural workers and to observe the perfect accord between both these elements.

The report then stated that Rene Mayer, former minister of France [and currently mayor of a small French commune], developed a theme on the three great dominions of France, that is, in the Atlantic, European [Rhineland], and Mediterranean spheres. According to the report, Mayer stated that French North Africa, strengthened and unified with France, would make possible the defense of Europe. The report went on to quote him as saying that France has nothing to hide, nor does she need to conceal or justify her actions in the French Union.

The source reported Governor General Leonard as expressing his satisfaction with the opportunity to show the visiting mayors not only what had been accomplished in Algeria, but the huge task that remained to be carried out. He was

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further reported as reiterating the idea of French-North African solidarity, adding that Algeria could be a "splendid, necessary link between Europe and the massive African continent, which constitutes the great hope of the future Europe." In conclusion, he was reported as expressing his conviction that all those who had come at the invitation of the Algerian mayors would witness what was being done in Algeria "for the common good and with a common will which unites all the strata of the people in a fraternal effort." (4)

Final Addresses Include Thoughts on European Unity

The 7 October issue of L'Echo d'Oran reported that on 6 October, Mayor Bucaille spoke on the advantages of mutual insurance, followed by Mayor Malpel with a talk on rural dwellings, Mayor Le Gallo with the history of federations of mayors, and Gaouer with a description of the Mouvement des Communes d'Europe. The report stated that Gaouer indicated the magnitude of the task of unifying Europe, referring to national and economic interests as complex and entangled forces which have caused dissension among the nations of Europe and turned them into traditional enemies. The problem, he was quoted as saying, is unique in the world of today, and those who believe in the total supremacy of the state and proclaim their belief as a religious dogma are condemning themselves to suicide. (3)

Nationalist Denies Congress Represents Algeria

On 1 November, L'Algérie Libre, biweekly newspaper of the MTLD (Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques, Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberty), carried an article by Abou Djamel criticizing the Second Congress of Mayors. His comments follow in summarized form.

Anyone unacquainted with the colonial institutions in Algeria must have supposed that the hundreds of mayors at the recent congress were mainly Moslem Algerians, since the Moslems are in the majority in Algeria. But all the 300 municipalities, except perhaps one, are headed by French mayors. Indeed, in 1947, Tebessa and Cavaignac had Moslem mayors, but the government lost no time in finding some pretext to dissolve their municipal councils. We see thus that the mayors at the recent congress, although ostensibly speaking for 10 million Algerians, actually represented but one tenth of them.

No mention was made at their meeting of the antidemocratic spirit in our local assemblies nor of government interference in local affairs and elections. The colonialists, mindful of the threat to their authority in Morocco and Tunisia, proclaim that Algeria is French and that all is well with the French-Moslem union. To prove this, they offer the "gift" of the presidency of the departmental assemblies of Algiers and Constantine to two Moslem general councilors, who are, of course, servile valets of colonialism.

We, however, believe in the representatives who, from the day of their election, never cease their service to the people and who refuse to jump on the official bandwagon. The only true representatives are those who adhere to the nationalist movement. (5)

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1. Algiers, Le Journal d'Algier, 2 Oct 52
2. Ibid., L'Echo d'Algier, 6 Oct 52
3. Oran, L'Echo d'Oran, 7 Oct 52
4. Algiers, Le Journal d'Algier, 6 Oct 52
5. Ibid., L'Algérie Libre, 1 Nov 52

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